

TO THE
ELECTORS OF WESTMINSTER.

*On the importance of their making a
proper choice at the next Election of
Members to serve in Parliament.*

North Hampstead, Long Island,

15th Nov. 1817.

GENTLEMEN,

The situation, in which our beloved country is now placed is such as to make every good Englishman desire to be able to do something for her deliverance. Far from you, I am very sure, is the thought of pretending a carelessness, or indifference, as to the cause of freedom, merely on account of the state of apparent depression, in which that cause now is. It would be base and unnatural in the last degree for a son to be careless, or indifferent, towards a parent, merely because that parent had become feeble, or had fallen into affliction. And, it is not less base and unnatural for men to entertain such coldness towards their common parent, their country, merely because she is in a state of oppression. It is very easy for men to be patriots when their country is not oppressed; when she has no need of defence; when she is

free and prosperous. The times of her oppression, of her dangers and calamities, are the only times when real patriotism has room to display itself. Why do we pronounce the names of HAMPDEN and SYDNEY, who have long since been dead, with so much reverence, while there are now living a Lord Hampden and a Lord Sydney, whose names we never pronounce, and of whose very existence, were it not for the Court Kalendar, the public would be wholly ignorant? It is, because the former stood forward in the cause of their country in times of great peril, while the latter have never stood forward in her cause at all.

Amongst all the duties of man there are none which are more binding than the duties which he owes his country. The obligations contracted at the altar, "for better and for worse, in sickness and in health," are not more perfect than those which we all contract with the community in which we are born. If any man say, that he could not *help* being born in his native country, and that he has entered into no positive contract to love and defend it; we may tell him, that, neither could he help being born with hands, and that he has en-

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tered into no positive compact not to employ those hands in the commission of murder. A man's obligations to assist, to cherish, to protect and defend his parents and his children, are not more perfect than his obligations to do the same with regard to his country; and, the man, who will take no pains and make no sacrifices for the latter is full as base as the man, who can, without an effort to save them, see his parents or his children perish.

Some men imagine, that they can, by avoiding all open exertion in public matters, get rid of their share of their country's shame. Under this supposition, they wrap themselves up in a sort of affected disgust; pretend to be mere spectators; and talk of the country as if they themselves were not of the community. They tell you, that exertion is of *no use*, and that, therefore, they will not exert themselves. Men of this description are amongst the most foolish as well as the most worthless; for, it is impossible for a man to shake off his relationship with his country; it is impossible for him to impose upon the world by his affected disgust. The world will see, that, at bottom, he is a disappointed and selfish man. To see the clear proof of this aptitude in the world to detect this affected disgust, and to judge truly and justly with regard to it, you should have an opportunity of witnessing

the *contempt*, which, in America, is sure to fall on all those Englishmen who *rail against England*. The people here have a great and deep-rooted prejudice against England, taking it as a country; but, such is the natural abhorrence of mankind of every thing *unnatural*, that these same people never like those Englishmen, who vilify and abuse their native country in a mass.

Besides, this sort of conduct is foolish in the extreme. Such men throw away that which it ought to be their pride to claim as their inheritance. Were they, indeed, the natives of some little, pitiful state, having nothing worthy of the name of nation. Were they the natives of a country who had a score or two of times changed masters, and who, like the Swiss or the Germans could not tell to-day what government or laws they should have to obey to-morrow. Were they the natives of a country without power, without character, without defined limits, and almost without a name; then, indeed, the folly of *going a country-hunting* would not be so flagrantly foolish. But, how is it possible for an *Englishman* to get rid of his character as such? Go where he will on the face of the whole globe, he will find that the character of his country, her fame, for good or for evil, has gone before him. Go where he will he will find some to praise and some to cen-

sure his country; never any body to despise her; but, if he attempt to turn his back upon her, and deal in general abuse of her, he himself is sure to be despised. In short, a man can no more get rid of the character of an Englishman than he can get rid of his features or his skin.

If any man say, that it is enough for him to take care of *his own concerns*, I should be glad to ask him if the safety of his *property* and *person* be *no concern of his own*? When the tax-gatherer comes to take away a good part of his earnings, he then finds, that *law* and *government* are concerns, in which he is pretty closely and deeply interested. He finds, that he cannot *stand aloof* here; that he cannot save his purse by withdrawing himself from his country's cause; that his affected disgust avails him nothing. If a slave were to demand his freedom, would any body tell him to be quiet and to *attend to his own concerns*? And, if a band of slaves were endeavouring to obtain their freedom, would the band be satisfied with four or five, who should say we will *take no part*, we will mind our work and our messes, will share with you in your freedom if you obtain it, and not share in your stripes if you fail? Yet, the conduct of those Englishmen, who now hang back, is precisely of the character of that of these selfish slaves.

If conduct like this would be inex-

cuseable in any man in England, how can it be otherwise than reprehensible in any man in Westminster? We all say, that, if we had *the choosing of our own representatives*, we should ask no more. We all know, that the whole of our oppressions have come from the want of our having this power. But, if the mass of the nation has to complain of their want of the power to choose such men as they can confide in, *you* have not grounds for such a complaint. Your right of voting is not so extensive as it *ought* to be; but, still, it has been proved by experience, that, *if you exert yourselves*, the combinations of Corruption will not prevail against you. Thus, then, as far as *two Members* go, you have all the advantages of *Reform in Parliament* already in your own hands. And, you should bear in mind, that even *two Members* may, if industrious, zealous and able, do a great deal.

But, as all depends upon the *sort of men* that you choose, it is on this subject that I now address you, and I am the less restrained in taking this liberty, because I am very sure, that you will have the justice to recollect, that in your memorable emancipation from the trammels of the two factions of Boroughmongers, few men laboured with more zeal and perseverance than myself. You have seen instances enough of the prodigious effects, which single individuals are able to produce, though not in parliament.

What might not, then, be done by even one such individual in parliament? And you have the absolute power of putting *two* such individuals into parliament. If you had had two members to draw together last winter, and to devote all their time and talents to the cause, do you think, that things would have been as they now are? If those members, by collecting every sort of matter of accusation against Corruption, by moulding it into distinct *motions, resolutions, or articles of impeachment*, and by thus *fixing the attention* of the nation to point after point, 'till the causes of the people's ruin and 'till the crimes of Corruption should have been known to every man, and should have been placed on indelible record. If, by pursuing this course, your two members had destroyed all the sophistry, and baffled all the craft, of Corruption, and had shown a resolution never to be turned aside from their pursuit. If they had called upon the people for new exertions, and had shewn, by their own example, that exertion was a duty and that it would not be in vain. If such had been the conduct of your members, do you believe, that Corruption would have dared to do what she did? Instead of this what did you see? One of your members tendering an amendment in defence of the abused and calumniated people, and the other suffering it to drop dead from the hand

of his colleague. In short, after having seen the rights of the whole nation, their very personal safety not excepted, taken away without one single bold and distinct and memorable effort to prevent so outrageous an act of despotism, you saw even yourselves driven from your place of meeting, for reasons such as would be assigned for pelting away noisy and bitten dogs; and this you saw done, you saw the insulting measure pass quietly from stage to stage, without seeing, on the part of your members any *formal protest*, in the way of resolution, remonstrance, or declaration, against this unparalleled act of insult and oppression. Is there a man of you, whom I am now doing myself the honour to address, who, being a member for *any place*, would have sat in the House without placing on its journals a formal and memorable declaration upon this subject? Not a man. What, then, were you to think of *your own* members, who neglected this sacred duty, or who, from one of them not being supported by the other, failed to perform it? Will any one say, that the bringing forward of any such declaration would have been of *no use*? What then, I should be glad to know, is of any use? And, if no effort, no struggle against Corruption, be of *any use*, why is *any man* to be preferred before another man; and how senseless are all the boasts about the

"triumph of Westminster"? For, what triumph has she, if the thing she has acquired be of *no use*?

Let me beseech you, Gentlemen, not to listen, for one moment, to this paltry species of excuse. *Every effort* well-directed is of use. The point would not have been carried; the Bill would have passed. But, what of that? Would a solemn declaration against it have been *useless*? We did not carry *our* point of electing Mr. PAUL. SHERIDAN got in. But, were our prodigious efforts *useless*? No: for the two factions of Borough-mongers have never since shown their face in your City. I do not like *despairing* and *disgusted* members of parliament any more than despairing and disgusted *soldiers* or *sailors*. For, in both cases, despair and disgust are mere pretences for a want of inclination, or of spirit, to perform some great duty. If Hampden and Sydney and the rest of the men, who fought a forty or fifty years battle against the Stuarts, had been of the Order of Despair, England would have been a den of slaves long and long ago. Hampden was defeated in the Courts of Justice; but, he did not quit his pursuit. Sydney was driven into exile for the security of his life; but, even in that exile he did not *despair*. In that exile he wrote in defence of Liberty those essays, which alone are sufficient to immortalize his name. Hundreds of men have been full of

hope at the bottom of a dungeon. And, shall we, then, hear with patience men, whose persons are secured by privilege, and who are at full liberty to exert all their talents, talk of *despair*!

It must be clear to every man living, that, if an industrious, and bold, and persevering course had been pursued by your two Members last winter, Corruption would have been checked in her progress of insolence and cruelty. No one can pretend, therefore, that it is not the bounden duty of the Electors of Westminster, to elect, when they shall again have the power, such men as are both able and willing to do their duty.

With regard to the particular persons who ought to be elected by you, there will be some men, notwithstanding all that has been said in former numbers of my Register, to lift up their hands and eyes, and to pretend to be shocked to death, when I say that Sir Francis Burdett *ought not to be re-elected*, unless, at least, he pledge himself in the most positive manner to do certain things. I am very well aware that there will not be wanting persons enough to look upon this as a sort of high treason; but, I address myself to the *sense*, and not to the *nonsense*, of Westminster; I address myself to those spirited and sensible men, who chose Sir Francis Burdett, because he was the *friend of the People*, and not to that foolish

rabble, who drew him to his house in triumph after hearing him express his approbation of that *very corn-bill*, for the approving of which same corn-bill the house of Mr. Robinson was attacked. I address myself to men who are too proud to be the *tools* of any body; who are capable of reasoning themselves, and who are therefore, willing to listen to reason. In former numbers of the Register, I have made complaints on the part of the people, against the conduct of Sir Francis Burdett, and upon this subject, I beg leave to refer you to my fourth letter addressed to Messrs. Goldsmith and Hinxman; to my second letter to Mr. Hallett, to my two letters to Mr. Hunt, and to my second letter to Major Cartwright, all written from this Island since the 31st of July last. In these numbers of the Register you find fully and clearly stated, all my grounds of complaint against Sir Francis. I request you to read these numbers with attention, and to decide upon them as men of sense and of justice ought to decide.

You remember well what labours we underwent in order to rescue the City of Westminster from the grasp of the Boroughmongers. You remember well, that, until this object was effected, you had no more use for your reason than have the inhabitants of Old Sarum. To talk of your sense, or of your public spirit, was vanity and foolishness; for, there was no

room for the exercise of either your sense or your public spirit. The mere name of Fox on the one side, and of some Pittite sycophant on the other side, was all that was offered to you. Great, indeed, was the triumph in the shaking off of that slavish submission. But, if you are not now to *exercise your reason*; if you are not now to deliberate and discuss for yourselves; if a mere name or names be now to awe you into silence, to benumb your faculties of thinking, and to make your choice a matter of form and ceremony, like the choice of any of the members of the Rotten-boroughs; if this be now to be the case, what have you *gained*? Where is your *triumph*? What is become of that *freedom*, of which you have so much and so justly boasted, and what is become of that high character which you had so deservedly acquired?

If you are now to re-elect Sir Francis Burdett as a *matter of course*; if you are to receive your other member from *his nomination*, or from that of any Club or Committee, if this be the case, he is the *patron* of the City, and the other member is his slave, or, at best, that other member is no more than the *nominee* of a little Junto resembling a close corporation. Shameful, scandalous, sorrowful, degrading, indeed, would it be to hear you acknowledge, that you have brought yourselves into this situation, but ten thousand times more degrading it

would be, to see you act as if you were content to remain in such a situation. And, yet, in this situation you are, and in this situation you show that you are contented to remain, if you shut your ears and eyes; if you resolve not to exercise your reason and your senses, as to the recent conduct of Sir Francis Burdett, and as to his fitness or unfitness as a person to be re-chosen by you.

It is right, that you should bear in mind, that Sir Francis Burdett never stood forward in the work of rescuing you from the grasp of the Boroughmongers. You, in bravely seconding the efforts of that brave, though unfortunate, gentleman Mr. PAULL, rescued your two seats yourselves from that rapacious and tyrannical grasp; and you freely bestowed one of those seats upon Sir Francis Burdett, in which he has sitten ever since. So that, thus far you are under no obligations to him, while, notwithstanding the whimsical notion of being forced into Parliament, he is certainly under great obligations to you; for, if we could set down as nothing the great honour of representing such a City, we now see, that the seat in which you have placed him, protects him against those dungeons, to which every man of you is continually exposed. Is this no obligation to confer upon a man? I myself was a householder in Westminster last winter; and how happy should I have

been to enjoy such a protection! Instead of which *exile* or a *dungeon* appeared to every one to be my choice. There was nothing in my conduct which rendered me less worthy of protection than he; and nothing in the character or conduct of my family that rendered them more deserving of anxiety, hardship, and pain, than his family. Yet he and his were protected, and I and mine exposed to every species of injury and danger. Therefore, he and his family have here derived from *your hands* the greatest of all earthly benefits: security from the effects of arbitrary power.

I am, therefore, wholly at a loss to discover, on what it is that any one can pretend to found a right in Sir Francis Burdett, or his Committee, to nominate members for Westminster, and to look upon his re-election as a matter of course, and about which no questions are to be asked. Indeed there is no foundation for such a right; and, therefore, I trust, that you will ask many questions before you again elect this gentleman.

His desertion of the Reformers, at the opening of the last session, is notorious; his frequent and impatient calls upon the people to come forward; his expressions of anger against them for their backwardness; his sending a Circular, signed by himself, to cause a Meeting of Deputies to deliberate on a Bill; and his subsequent abandonment of Deputies, Bill and all, are

also all notorious. And, are all these things nothing? Are they to be wholly overlooked for the sake of a name? If so, he is the *Patron* of Westminster as completely as Lord Lonsdale is of any of his boroughs.

But, the *Corn Bill*, was that *nothing*? If it was, then was the nation a most foolish nation, and the people of Westminster a most foolish People. You well know, that the *whole nation* petitioned against that cruel measure. You well know, that the Bill was finally passed with troops drawn up round the House. You well know, that, since that time, it has been stated in numerous petitions, that the passing of that Bill, in defiance of the whole nation's voice, was *proof positive*, that the House *did not represent the people*. You well know, that you petitioned against that Bill. And, you cannot but know, that Sir Francis Burdett *did not oppose that Bill*; but, that in fact, he was *for the Bill*. He might differ from you *in opinion*; but, it was his duty to obey your instructions, and *to oppose the Bill with all his might*, or, to resign his seat, which he might with the more grace do, as it had been "*forced*" upon him. When Lord CASTLEREAGH called upon him to declare manfully *for the Bill*, or *against the Bill*, he answered, that he was "*neither for it nor against it*." What! he was neither for nor against, though he had just received the positive instructions of his constituents to

be *against*; and though the whole nation, the Landowners and Farmers excepted, had petitioned against it. I have never since that day heard him talk of his *respect for petitions* without shrugging up my shoulders. It was clear, that, in that case, the interests of the Landowners and Farmers were preferred to those of the whole community; and, though he was a great Landowner himself, his constituents and the people at large were not. I was a landowner and farmer both, and I suffered much more than he from the low price of corn. Mr. HUNT was in the same situation. Yet we bestirred ourselves against that iniquitous and hard-hearted measure, against which I wrote from first to last, and against which we both sent a petition, along with thousands of other persons. That petition from the County of Wilts, was sent to be presented by Sir Francis; but, it was presented in a way rather to cover it with odium than with respect; and Mr. METHUEN was permitted with impunity to misrepresent and abuse it, though Sir Francis had been amply furnished with facts wherewith to have silenced and put to shame that miserable creature, that despicable tool of a county junto of Fox-hunters and greedy Landowners and farmers.

At no great distance of time after the passing of the *Corn Bill*, there was a Meeting in Westminster to petition against the renewal of the war upon the return of Napoleon from Elba. Upon that occasion a *Placard* printed by Mr. M'CREECHY, was published to call the attention of the People to the subject of the intended Meeting. In this *Placard* it was asked:

" why we should go to war with France ;" and, then, it was answered :

" In France there are no tithes.

" In France seats are not bought and sold like cattle stalls.

" In France there are no Corn Bills.

" In France" &c. &c.

There were many more of these " In France's." Well ! But, before the Placard could be printed, it must be shown to Sir Francis, who RUN HIS PEN THROUGH "*In France there are no Corn-Bills*;" because, that was matter which had *nothing to do with the object of the intended meeting*; though it puzzled Mr. HUNT and me out of our wits to endeavour to discover, *how the Corn-Bill had less to do with a subject of peace or war than the tithes or the sale of seats had !* For this fact Mr. HUNT can vouch ; and, if necessary, he can prove it by other witnesses.

I did not carry this Placard to Sir Francis ; but, I drew it up, and I along with Mr. HUNT, waited the return of the gentleman who did carry it. The fact can be proved at any time, and it shows, in the strongest possible light, Sir Francis's contempt, upon this most important occasion, of the prayers of his constituents, and his disregard of their interests.

Well, then, was it *just* to reprobate Castlereagh and his set for introducing the Corn-Bill ? Was it *just* to accuse the Houses of hardness of heart in passing that Bill ? If it was, is it also *just* to re-elect Sir Francis Burdett without a single question as to that Bill, which, observe, is always in existence, and always ready to assist in oppressing the People. Mr. COKE's

being for that Bill has *justly* rendered him so odious in the County of Norfolk as to make the People prefer even a notorious enemy to freedom before him. His conduct, upon that occasion, has caused him to be *pelted*, and to be *burnt in effigie*. And yet, are you to be allowed to ask no questions of your representative upon that subject ? Is this injurious, this cruel, this unfeeling measure ; is even *this* to remain in force, and you not dare to open your lips upon the subject, because your representative is a great Landowner and the master of whole bands of farmers, who are now driving and scouring the country, and, in the character of Yeomanry Cavalry, actually hunting down the people as they hunt down foxes and hares ? If you are to be muzzled in this way, things are come to a pretty pass ; and, in getting clear of the Boroughmongers, you have, as the old saying is, taken a fair jump out of the frying pan into the fire. You have subscribed, you have laboured, you have made all sorts of sacrifices to put Sir Francis Burdett into parliament ; you now give him a protection against that danger, to which you yourselves are exposed ; and, are not you to be allowed even to ask why he was for a Bill, which, in its very nature, tended to lessen your dinner and to augment his income ? Surely you may be allowed just to ask this ; or, if you dare not do this, I am sure you will never again treat with contempt and scorn the wretched voters of Honiton or Grampound.

If any one of you, having, and being well known to have, an only son, were to be absent from any meeting, or other public duty, and were to as-

sign as the cause, the illness of your son, who had recently entered into the most honourable corps of Sidmouth's police gentlemen, do you not think, that your fellow citizens would take the liberty to ask you (just to ask you) how *your* son happened to belong to that honourable corps? Do you not think, that they would suspect, that you were become a little less ardent in your detestation of Sidmouth's famous corps and of all his proceedings and intentions? Do you not think, in short, that they would look upon you as a person *no longer to be trusted* as to public matters? You know that such would be their decision, and in the justice of this decision all the world would acquiesce. And, are you not to be permitted to ask an *explanation* with regard to Sir Francis's son's being in the Standing Army in time of peace? I do not say, that you ought to *presume* blame in the father; but does not the matter demand *explanation*? Would you at once presume blame in a fellow citizen; would you, at once, discard him as a person not fit to be trusted; and will you not insist upon even an explanation from your representative? Will you acknowledge, that you yourselves ought, at once, to be declared unworthy of trust, upon grounds, which, when apparent in *his* conduct, do not justify you even in putting a *question* to him? This would be self-abasement! this would be abandonment of your rights and yourselves, beyond any thing of the kind ever heard of. This would be acting upon the logic of Ralpho in Hudibras, who proves very clearly that *fiddles, girls, dice*, are the property of the

Saints, and are unjustly detained from them by the wicked; for that, the things are *very laudable in themselves*, and only become bad when used by the *ungodly*. So, I suppose, we shall be told, that Standing Armies in time of peace are not bad *in themselves*, but become bad only by being in the hands of the Boroughmongers, from whom Mr. Burdett has had the patriotism to take one commission at least, one long sword, one jacket and tippet, one high cap, one ridicule bag, and one pair of German Whiskers.

The inconsistency is so flagrant here, the insult to you so outrageous, that it is impossible to speak of it in terms sufficiently strong. Suppose Mr. Burdett's troop had made part of the soldiers, who were stationed round the Commons' House, while the Corn Bill was passing. How could the father, without *some explanation*, have complained of the employment of those troops? How could the father complain, if the son and his troop came to take him and you from any public meeting, or to disperse you when so assembled? One of the reasons for your electing him was his distinctly declared abhorrence of all standing armies, and especially in time of peace; and, shall his son make one of that army now, and you not be suffered to *ask the reason* of so striking a sign of change of sentiment in the father? As I once before put the case, suppose a son of *mine* were now to go home and become an officer in the army; suppose you were to see *my son's* name on their list of whiskered or unwhiskered commanders; what would you say? Why this: "Cobbett wants to sneak round to

"the Boroughmongers at last; he has sent over his son to creep in first and to prepare the way for himself; he has contended against them till he is tired; we are sorry for his defection, but we should be fools indeed to place any reliance upon him in future." This would be unjust, until you had given me time for explanation; but, if I neglected, for any length of time, to give that explanation, and to state explicitly, that I disapproved of my son's conduct, your conclusion against me would then be perfectly just. And, shall this be just in *my* case, and not just in that of *Sir Francis Burdett*? What is it that can give him this right of exemption from all the obligations by which other men are bound, and from all the conclusions of reason, drawn in the cases of other men? That attribute of the king, which makes it impossible for his Majesty ever to do wrong, has been much ridiculed; but, really, if this be the way, in which you are to be muzzled with regard to the family of Burdett, the ridicule with regard to our real king's attribute must, in common decency, be discontinued.

But, there is a circumstance, which I have never yet dwelt upon, which renders this employment of Sir Francis's son particularly odious. You know, that, in the Act of Parliament, which raised the present Royal Family to the throne of England, there is an express provision, that *no foreigner born*, whether naturalized or not, shall ever hold any pension under the crown, or shall ever be a member of either House of Parliament, or shall ever fill any place, or

office, of trust or profit, civil or military. This Act, a most important Act, and which was passed for the express purpose (as its title imports) of *preserving the rights and liberties of the people*; this act is violated in the person of the Commander of the very regiment, in which Mr. Burdett has *chosen* to serve; I say *chosen*, because there could be no *force* here at any rate. The Prince is the *Colonel*, indeed; but the real and actual commander is a *foreigner*, a German of the name of *QUENTIN*; and, as if to add still more to the shame of the thing, the vacancy which Mr. Burdett filled up was made by one of those ten gentlemen, who had too much spirit to serve under this man, without preferring a charge of *cowardice* against him, and for the not having *quite made out* which charge *to the satisfaction* of a court martial, composed of officers selected by the Duke of York's people, those ten gentlemen were, *without any court martial at all*, dismissed from the regiment! If nothing could keep Mr. Burdett out of the army; if he had actually become captivated with the attire of the troops, after being escorted to the Tower by them along with his father; if that reading of *Magna Charta* in Latin, which, as the news-papers and prints-shops told us took place while the dragoons were breaking into his father's house, had actually made him mad to become a dragoon; if he had been really seized with an absolute fury of love for the trade of the "*Piccadilly Butchers*," surely some corps other than that of Colonel *Quentin's* might have been fixed upon! Aye! but, then, this corps was also "*the Prince's own*

Regiment"! Alas! my old friends, how we have been fooled! But, shall we *now* shut our eyes and close our ears, and be afraid, or ashamed, to open our mouths! Still, all-I ask for is *explanation*. Let the father openly express his decided disapprobation; let him convince us, that he has not thus given his unqualified approbation of a standing army in time of peace, and, upon this score, I am satisfied.

You all know, that, in the *lists* of the House of Commons, made out for the purpose of showing the chain of *dependence* which exists, and which influences its Members, not only the *places, pensions, &c.*, which the Members themselves hold are noticed, but also the *places, pensions, offices* and *authorities* held by their *relations*, going so wide as to take in *sons-in-law, uncle, nephews*, and still wider. Amongst the offices of *relations*, which are, in these lists, looked upon as rendering Members dependent, or influenced, are *military offices*; and, many of these are mentioned in a list published by Major Cartwright last summer. Now, is it *just* for us to suppose, that *other* Members are all influenced by having *military relations*, and that Sir Francis Burdett cannot feel any such influence? Is this *just*? It would be a *shame*, some one will say, to suppose, that Sir Francis would be influenced by any such considerations. Then, is it not a *shame* also to suppose that *any body else* would be influenced by such considerations? And is it not a *shame* to put against the names of those other persons these charges of being thus influenced? Thus does this thing work for the Boroughmongers! Thus,

if we remain *silent* upon this subject, do we incur the charge of calumny and baseness in representing the *relationship of other Members* as a fair ground for a charge of presumed influence and corruption. If we hold our tongues upon this subject, let us, for decency's sake, keep our peace as to the dependence of Canning on account of the pensions of his mother and sisters.

Let me not be told, that Mr. Burdett's is not a pursuit of *gain*. There are several sorts of *gain* besides that of money. I have seen men game as keenly and cheat as craftily for bits of tobacco-pipe as any of the big rogues in St. James's Street ever gained for manors or advowsons; aye, and swear, and stamp and lie and stare and tear their hair as furiously. When a fellow from 'Change Alley, who has been higgling with the Devil for half a century, makes him over his soul at last for the sake of a Baronetcy, this is *gain* in his eyes. When a country looby's empty wife wishes to get a coronet on her coach, and, at last, worries the fool into the dirty bargain, this is looked upon as *gain*. When an officer in the army, though he may scorn money, gets a colony or castle to govern, a regiment to command, or a step in the way of promotion; any of these are *gain*. It is impossible but Mr. Burdett must *desire to rise*; and, without what is called *interest*, we know that he cannot rise, except by mere accident, and even then, but very slowly indeed. We do not presume any base motive in the heart of his father. We have no occasion to do this. But, on the other hand, we are not foolish enough to presume the

father to be *more than mortal*; and, unless we do this, we must suppose, that influence will exist. Besides, there are pulls at a father's heart more powerful than those of a desire to gratify the ambition of a son. That son, like other persons, is liable to incur the displeasure of his commanders; nay, he is liable to those circumstances, where interest may be necessary to save him from *disgrace*. What efforts have we seen made by friends, what sacrifices of their public duty, upon such occasions! And, shall we suppose, that a father would make none of these? Or, are we here again to exempt Sir Francis Burdett from all those conclusions, which reason and common sense draw with respect to all the rest of mankind? I have been many times pressed to put my sons in the army or navy; but, I have always said, "no: for the moment they enter there, I am an anxious slave." If I would have consented to my eldest son being a Clergyman, a friend, from whom I should have received the gift with the full assurance of its being the offering of nothing but kindness, would have given him a good living; but, though a living is a freehold for life, I saw, that *preferment* might be wished, and I foresaw all the curses of dependence for my son and myself; and therefore I declined the very generous offer, though I never have, and hope I never shall forget it. The *Bar*; the *Ragged Bar*, has always been my taste; for there, in spite of all the powers and all the foul play in the world, sound heads, great industry, and great talent, will make their way, while, in all the other pursuits, folly, laziness and profligacy may, if they

have *interest*, rise over all the talents and all the virtues that man can possess. The army, the cap and tippet and whisker trade, is, as far as relates to the officers, the lowest of all possible things. It is notorious, that fools are sent thither to keep them *out of harm's-way*; and that, as far as promotion and even the screening from disgrace go, there is no dependence but upon what is called *interest*; that is to say, parliamentary jobbing more or less direct.

But, it is the *example*, it is the *countenance*, which is thus given by Sir Francis to the *standing army in time of peace*, that is of the most consequence of all. This *Standing Army* is the thing by far the most hideous amongst all the hideous features of despotism. How often has he himself told us, that *freedom cannot exist in society with a standing army in time of peace*! How often has he told us, that we might *talk* about liberty, but that we never could have it, *while there was such an army*! How often have many of us taken pains to prove, that, in fact, this army was kept up for the sole purpose of *preventing a Reform*! Was all this *vain talk*? Was there any *meaning* in all this? And, are we not now to be allowed to *ask these questions*? And have we not a right to expect an *answer*? And, if we receive no answer, are we to be huffed into a re-election of Sir Francis as a matter of course; and does he really possess one of, or both, the Seats of Westminster in his own right?

If a standing army be the horrid thing that it has been described to be, what countenance has he now given

it! We know well, that a *Standing Soldiery* and freedom never co-existed in any country. Despotism and a settled Standing Soldiery are inseparable. It was a different thing before the times of *Barracks, Depots, and Military Colleges*. All these argue a settled and long-contrived design to introduce despotism into England. And all these now receive the countenance of Sir Francis Burdett. Would you allow *me* to rail against these things, and to speak of them as proofs of a deep design to enslave the nation, while one of my sons was a swaggering inhabitant of those Barracks, bearing by his own choice, a commission in these bands of Soldiery; would you allow *me* to do this without my *disavowing* the act of my son? No. You would not. And, upon what principle, then, is it to be allowed in Sir Francis Burdett?

You complain, and very justly complain, of the oppression of the *taxes*; you, who are tradesmen, see taken from you by the tax-gatherer, those sums, which ought to accumulate in your hands for the benefit of your children; you, who are journey-men and labourers see taken away, in the same manner, the very bread that ought to enter your and your children's mouths. Well, what is the cause of this? Where does the money, which is taken from you, go to? Why, about a *third* part of the whole goes to maintain the Standing Army. Every pot of porter you drink pays more than a *penny* to the Standing Army; every pound of six-shilling tea, pays about *fifteen-pence* to the Standing Army; every pound of soap pays about a *penny* to the

Standing Army; every pound of candles pays about *three half-pence* to the Standing Army; every bushel of salt pays about *five shillings* to the Standing Army; and thus it is as to almost every article which you consume. What, then, is the *value* of all the *talk* about taxes and oppressions, if this Standing Army is to be *countenanced* by Sir Francis Burdett? If you were to see one of *my* sons now becoming a tax-eater as a commissioned officer in that army, and if I left it to be supposed, that he was there eating taxes by *my* consent, would you be satisfied by being told, that *one* officer could not eat *much* tax? Would you be satisfied by my saying nothing at all about the matter? Would you not see, that if I could be a *hater* of standing armies and yet let my son make part of one, *other haters* of standing armies might do the same?

Sir Francis has never said that he approved of the combination of despots to force the Bourbons upon the French People. He must know, for we all know, that it is the Standing Army of England in particular, which is now holding the French in the vilest bondage. But, as he cannot now reasonably complain of the *taxes* occasioned by the Standing Army; so cannot he, with any reason, complain of the employment of an army to prolong the slavery and misery of the French People. His son is, every day, liable to be sent to assist in that work of fulfilling the wishes of the Holy Alliance. Mr. Burdett may become a Captain General of a Holy League against human liberty and human happiness! One would think,

that, under such reflections, a father's heart would burn his ribs to cinder. And yet are you to be allowed to *ask* not a question upon the subject of this close alliance with that Holy League! Are you, I again ask, so completely muzzled; have you made so entire a surrender of your rights, as not to dare to ask, even in the most respectful terms, whether this alliance has taken place with your Member's approbation?

You all know well, that the Standing Army has, in many instances, been employed directly to violate the freedom of the people. You see in the narrative of Captain Raynes* the schemes which even Generals employed to entrap the people. There you see money given to soldiers to induce them to *take unlawful oaths*, in order that they might *break those oaths* and betray and bring to the gallows the men who had confided in them! What reason have you to suppose, that Mr. Burdett will disdain to follow the example of these generals? Besides, you know, that he is bound to obey the orders he may receive from his German commander, or from any other commander. Suppose his regiment had been employed in *surrounding and forcing* to prison the "*Blanketteers*" in Lancashire, who were met under all the protection of the laws, and peaceably met for the purpose of exercising that *right of petition*, which the father has extolled as being so valuable and sacred: suppose Mr. Burdett to have been one of the heroes who performed this memorable exploit? What a scene would

here have been! With what face would the father have *complained* of this outrage on all decency as well as on all law? Suppose his son had been the commander of the party, and had been that identical officer who cut the poor Blanketteer's head? Would he have been the *accuser of that son*? And yet, this, or the like of it, is every day, liable to happen!

In Ireland, afflicted Ireland, the taxes, as you well know, are, in many cases, collected by the Standing Army; that is to say, the soldiers act with the taxgatherers and enforce their demands. This was openly avowed by Castlereagh in the Spring of 1816; and, indeed, the fact is notorious. It is also notorious, that, while in that oppressed country, Castlereagh had *soldiers in abundance* as guards of honour to him. You know well, that Mr. Burdett is liable every day of his life, to be ordered on either of these services! And, is not this a curious thing to behold, while Sir Francis talks of the oppressions of Ireland and of the grounds of impeachment against Castlereagh? *Why*, gentlemen, should you be blind? *Why* should you shut your eyes? *Why* should you believe, that black and white are the same colours?

But, not to dwell longer upon the endless evils of this destination of your Member's Son, let me conclude this part of my subject by asking, what is now become of the *horror of the flogging system*? Shall I be told, that Mr. Burdett *does not approve of flogging*. This is too childish to be talked of. We know, that he *must* give his assent to it, and that he must

* Commented upon in the Register, No. 2, published Jan. 10th, 1818.

see it, and *cause it to be put into execution*. I may express my abhorrence of the loads of taxes, for instance; but, what would you say of me, if one of my sons were to become a *tax-gatherer*? I express my abhorrence of *Oliver*; but, if one of my sons were to become his associate, and I were to hold my tongue, would you still believe me sincere in my abhorrence of the trade in blood? Mr. Burdett is compelled to *assist* in the laying on of the cat o'nine tails; and he well knew that he would be so compelled. He well knew that he would be driven from the army if he *opposed* the use of the cat o'nine tails. And, can Sir Francis Burdett think, that *he alone* of all mankind is to be allowed to act thus, and that, too, without giving you, even *you*, a right to put any question to him on the subject? A Mr. PORTAL, in Hampshire, a Whig, who took a leading part in the petition against the continuance of the *Property Tax*, and who called it a *highwayman's tax*, was put to *shame and confusion* by being asked, whether *he himself* was not a *Commissioner for the enforcing of that very tax*! He could not deny the fact. He shuffled and wriggled, and said that *somebody must be Commissioners*. But, he was so belaboured by Mr. HUNT with the argument, that if the tax was a tax of *highwaymen*, all the parties engaged in enforcing it were *highwaymen*, and, of course, deserved to be hanged, that, at last, after fruitless efforts to explain away what he had said, he drew himself back out of sight amidst the laughing and hissing of the Meeting. And yet, shall we now be told, in justification of Sir Francis's son being in the army, that *somebody* will lay on the cat o'nine tails, and that, if he does not do it, *somebody else will*? Shall we be told, that Mr. Burdett took his commission with the hope of *mitigating* the severity of the cat o'nine tails?

This was just what Mr. PORTAL said of his commission of highwayman's tax; but, he was answered, that by his receiving and acting under that commission, he *gave countenance* to the highwayman measure; and that, as to any *mitigation*, it was nonsense, for that he was compelled by his oath to enforce the tax. And is not Mr. Burdett compelled by *his oath* to enforce, when ordered, the infliction of the cat o'nine tails? Again, I ask, then, is there, my old and zealous friends, any particular exemption in the rules of reason, and in the maxims of right and wrong, which exempt the family of Burdett from the conclusions which are applicable to all the rest of mankind?

Oh, no! There is no such exemption; and you will, by your conduct, *prove*, that there is no such exemption. You must, and you will, demand explanation upon this head, and upon some others, which I have to mention in future Letters. In the meanwhile, read, I pray you, with attention and *impartiality*, all that may be published in answer to what I have here said, and believe me always to remain proud of being

Your Countryman,
WM. COBBETT.

ERROR in No. 9.—In the sentence beginning at the bottom line of the first column, viz. "*But, this aristocratic faction consists principally of persons, concerned in commerce, and having great influence with banks, and by means of their strict connection with monied persons on your side the water*", the conjunction *and* after the word *banks* is erroneously inserted. For the discovery of this inaccuracy the Publisher is indebted to a new publication called "*Shadgett's Weekly Review*," (No. 6) in which the small but ingenious Critic waggishly exhibits this obvious error of the Press as an instance of Mr. Cobbett's writing nonsense.

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